

Experts Group Meeting

PARTNERING WITH PRIVATE SECTOR IN ARAB STATES: Exploring converging interests in urban recovery with a focus on land tenure security and housing

27-28 November – Kuwait

Concept Note and Programme

BACKGROUND

Many cities in Arab states and beyond went through several layers of destruction and reconstruction over the centuries. Such processes are extremely traumatic for the populations affected, displaced and often dispossessed, and very conflictual for the different groups with a stake in the reconstruction and management of the urban centres after the conflict. In current times, when wars are often fought within countries and in cities, the scale of human suffering, displacement and physical destruction is unprecedented, magnified by modern weaponry and by the internationalization of internal conflicts.

As interest of various national and international groups and stakeholders play out in the warfare, they also play out and are reflected in the reconstruction processes that follow. The spectrum of interests of the different actors is hard to describe. Considerations can be political, ethnic and religiously motivated, based on technical assumptions, defined by international law and frameworks, driven by short or long-term economic interests, influenced by environmental sustainability considerations, etc.

The shape of modern cities is determined by how such conflicting needs, interests and investments have been resolved. In some cities, the interests of certain groups have prevailed over others', and urban centres have become more unequal, economically inefficient, unaffordable for the lower and middle classes and less attractive for people and investors. This has set the seeds for further future social conflicts, unrest, migration and economic stagnation. Other rehabilitation or reconstruction interventions have been more inclusive, paving the way for a more sustainable urban future.

The Expert Group Meeting organizers believe that by strengthening the collaboration between different actors involved in the urban recovery (particularly the real estate developers and the UN), the Arab cities re-emerging from war will be better places for people to live, businesses to thrive and investments made to be more profitable. The Meeting intends to find common understanding and areas of converging interests between UN and real estate developers, so that improved models of investment and mutually beneficial collaboration in war-thorn cities can be developed. Other key stakeholders (e.g. academia, land professionals, key development organisations, etc.) will also take part in the meeting.

The areas of potential collaboration with the private sector could be many. While the meeting might touch upon the many elements of urban reconstruction, it will focus on the reconstruction and construction of houses and the right to adequate housing, provision of tenure security, and restitution of housing, land and property rights. The possible role of real estate developers in the housing, land and property rights processes will be explored, among other issues. The Expert Group Meeting (EGM) builds on the work done by the Arab Land Initiative and the discussions and deliberations taken at the first Arab Land Conference, held in Dubai, UAE in February 2018.

OBJECTIVES OF THE MEETING

The meeting will be an open and informal discussion between real estate private sector, UN and other selected stakeholders. **The main objective is to identifying converging interests in urban rehabilitation and reconstruction, particularly in the areas of land tenure security and housing.**

Specific objectives are to:

1. Share information about the different perspectives on challenges, risks and interests in upcoming urban rehabilitation and reconstruction work in selected Arab states (e.g. Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Libya, Palestine), with focus on (re)construction of houses and provision of tenure security and restitution of HLP rights;
2. Learn from earlier urban rehabilitation / reconstruction interventions in Arab states and other comparable contexts;
3. Identify the key areas of convergence and possible collaboration between real estate developers and UN;
4. Agree on a joint way forward.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

1. Set the foundations for emerging partnerships among actors that will have an important role in the rehabilitation and recovery of Arab cities;
2. Understanding of respective priorities and interests;
3. Next steps of the collaboration agreed (e.g. specific interventions; research and normative tools; etc.).

WHY IT IS IMPORTANT TO PARTICIPATE

For real estate developers / private sector	For UN and partners' organisations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Some of the investments made by real estate developers in reconstruction contexts did not achieve their full potential because they did not fall into a well thought-through overall sustainable urban recovery strategy; ▪ When investments fulfill the social corporate responsibilities and embrace more sustainable business models, the investors are better accepted by local communities, have better returns, and gain positive visibility; ▪ A partnership with the UN can provide developers with the tools and approaches to invest more sustainably and responsibly in their cities; ▪ The UN can constitute a good broker between governments and real estate developers who are committed to invest in sustainable and inclusive urban recovery; ▪ A broad framework for collaboration that reflect mutual interests and perspectives is agreed upon between private investors and the UN can facilitate the negotiations with governments; ▪ The meeting will give new perspective and ideas on the sector and open the doors for new opportunities! 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ If the UN and partners do not engage with the private sector, the private sector will rebuild the Arab cities anyway and an opportunity to influence urban recovery and reconstruction will be missed; ▪ To have a positive impact on the sustainable urban recovery of Arab cities, the UN and partners cannot ignore the perspective, interests and ways of operating of the private sector; ▪ The meeting is an opportunity to identify socially and financially viable approaches to urban recovery; ▪ The meeting is also an opportunity to get to know better the private sector and see what convergence of interest may be found; ▪ The meeting will allow the introduction to the private sector participants some of the frameworks and approaches that need to be considered in the reconstruction of conflict-affected contexts; ▪ The meeting will give new perspective and ideas on urban recovery and open the doors for new opportunities!

PARTICIPANTS

The expert group meeting will be attended by approximately twenty-five participants whose role, knowledge and experience are relevant to the objectives and theme of the meeting. A good balance of technical knowledge, operational experience, and transformational vision will be sought after in the identification of participants. Participants will represent the real estate developers interested in investing in the rehabilitation and recovery of Arab cities and a range of UN organisations – such as UN-Habitat, OHCHR, UNHCR, UNDP, etc. – and partners. A good gender balance will be considered.

METHODOLOGY

The meeting will be facilitated by a main facilitator, who might get some support from other participants for the management of specific sessions. The key notes speeches and presentations will be delivered by participants, who will be briefed in advance on the content and topic. Plenary discussions and group works will alternate. The main language of the meeting will be English, and Arabic interpretation might be provided depending on the participants' composition.

LOGISTICAL ARRANGEMENTS

The Expert Group Meeting will take place in Kuwait on the 27-28 November (TBC). Participants are expected make their own visa and accommodation arrangements. The costs of the attendance are to be covered by participants, unless otherwise agreed with the organisers.

CONTACTS

Ombretta Tempra, UN-Habitat / Global Land Tool Network, ombretta.tempra@un.org

Ameera Al Hassan, UN-Habitat, ameera.alhassan@un.org

PROGRAMME OUTLINE

An initial programme outline is below; a more detailed version of it will be developed before the meeting.

DAY 1	DAY 2
<p>SESSION 1 Opening remarks Objectives of the meeting and agenda Participants' introduction and expectations</p> <p>SESSION 2 Perspectives on priorities, interests, risks and challenges when intervening in cities destroyed by war by private sector and UN actors (e.g. relevant frameworks, programmes, plans, etc.)</p> <p>SESSION 3 Lessons learnt from earlier urban reconstruction programmes: what went right and what went wrong from different perspectives (e.g. Beirut, etc.)</p> <p>Recap of the lessons learnt for the way forward</p> <p>Closing of Day 1</p> <p><i>Dinner</i></p>	<p>Report back from day 1 and overview of day 2</p> <p>SESSION 4 Group work on key areas of convergence and collaboration identified in Day 1</p> <p>Next steps of the collaboration</p> <p>SESSION 5 Conclusions and way forward</p> <p>Closing</p>